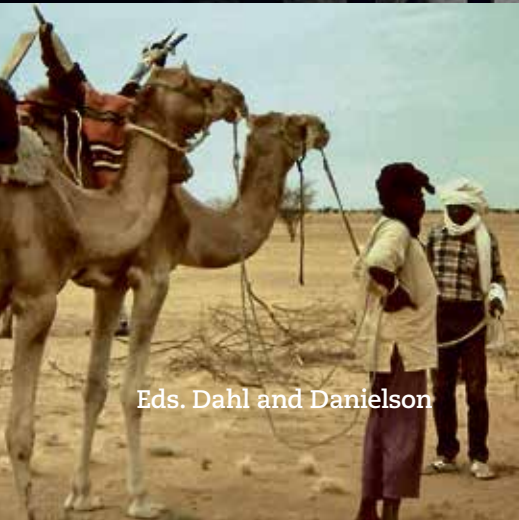




Faculty of Social Sciences
Stockholm University
1964 – 2014



Eds. Dahl and Danielson



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Department of Psychology

Gunn Johansson

TO GIVE A fair and substantial account of the most important events over fifty years at a large university department in a limited space is impossible. Therefore, this account will have to be read as an utterly summarizing sketch with some highlights of particular traits of the Department of Psychology. An invaluable source of information has been the jubilee book compiled at the 50 years' celebration of the Department of Psychology (Nilsson 2003).

When the Faculty of Social Sciences was formed in 1964, the Department of Psychology was four years old. Stockholm University College had recently become a state university, and psychology had become an autonomous subject of examination. What had, until 1960, been an Institute of Psychology, had turned into a regular university department that had just moved from a backyard house at Observatoriegatan to premises in the old main building of the Royal Institute of Technology (KTH) on Drottninggatan, opposite "The Haunted Castle" (*Spökslottet*).

Background

An embryo for the Department of Psychology can be traced back to 1934, when the board of Stockholm University College decided to create the Olof Eneroth Chair. Olof Eneroth, a pomologist, i.e. an expert in the cultivation of apples and other fruits, had already in 1876 donated his fortune to a chair, but the resources were insufficient and only after additional money had been allocated could the chair be instituted. Perhaps the testator's phrasing of the donation's purpose raised some consternation, delaying the matter. The will prescribed a chair in the "study of the connection between natural law and the virtuous and physical nature of Man, with particular concern for the upbringing of the growing generation into spiritual and bodily health". Despite this cryptic formulation, finally, after various turns, the decision was made to advertise a professorship in education and psychology, the first incumbent of which, David Katz, was appointed in 1937.

Later, a professorship in education was created, and the Olof Eneroth Chair was changed into a chair only in psychology, with Gösta Ekman as incumbent.

The 1960s

That was the situation when I first became acquainted with the Department of Psychology. At that time, examination results from a preparatory course, in combination with the marks from the General Certificate of Education (*studentexamen*), made up the selection instrument for about forty positions offered for first semester students. Eminent lectures were given at ‘proppen’ (‘the plug’, the propaedeutic course) by the most prominent researchers of the Department: Gösta Ekman, Daisy Schalling, David Magnusson, Gunnar Goude, Hannes Eisler and Marianne Frankenhaeuser. For those who were admitted, it soon became clear that the studies in psychology were heavily scheduled with extensive group work and laboratory experiments. Test theory and comprehensive group work with quite a bit of statistical calculation formed an important part. A feared ingredient was the training in interview methodology, where the interviewees were lower-level students. Interviews were taped and replayed in front of the group and teacher, who gave feedback about the performance. A strong sense of togetherness arose in some of the groups and study mates from that time have stayed my close friends.

Early research

Research and education in the 1960s were both marked by an academic and theoretical direction, with a strong focus on classical, experimental psychology, methods and method development. The work of the professor, Gösta Ekman, within psychophysics and scaling methodology, inspired a growing number of PhD students at the new Department. Later, they bore witness to the dynamic and creative research environment formed under the leadership of Ekman (Härnqvist 2003:53, Sjöberg 2003:142). Right from the start there was a strong relation to international research. The research tradition cultivated during this time was later strengthened and developed along different tracks, e.g. towards learning psychology, cognitive psychology and cognitive neuroscience. Psychophysics has, for example, become relevant when new technologies for brain imagery have made possible a dynamic development of the study of brain processes. Presently, this tradition stands strong in the research carried out at the Division for Perception and Psychophysics, which is now housed in a separate building in Frescati Hage, the Gösta Ekman Laboratory.

Longitudinal research

At the end of the 1960s, preparations went on at the Department of Psychology for one of the extensive, longitudinal research projects



The Gösta Ekman Laboratory for Sensory Research is named after Professor Gösta Ekman (1920-71), specialist in psychophysics and scale methodology. (Photo: Mats Danielson)

that have become an important part of the Faculty of Social Sciences' profile. The initiator and principal investigator of the project Individual Adjustment and Development (IDA) was David Magnusson, who succeeded Gösta Ekman on the Olof Eneroth Chair in 1969. The project deals with the individual development process in a life perspective, and from the beginning its aim was to widen the study of psychological development from cross-sectional analyses to the interaction be-

tween the individual and her context over time, i.e. the processes that characterize the individual pattern of development (see e.g. Magnusson & Stattin 1998). This project has followed several year-cohorts of school children in Örebro into middle age, and collected a large and valuable database, which is still in use for analyses of new research questions. It is worth mentioning that the IDA project passed relatively unaffected by the crisis for big longitudinal databases that hit our faculty

in the aftermath of the so-called Metropolit affair. The reason for this was probably that the project, already before its start and throughout, was well-anchored in Örebro through the school administration and the media. Yet another longitudinal undertaking, the Betula project, has later been added as an important basis for research at the Department of Psychology (see below under Research in Cognitive Psychology).

Education with and without an occupational focus

The Psychology students of the 1960s had a range of purposes for their studies. There were, like today, some who studied psychology in order to better understand themselves and their fellow humans. There was also a group who, by acquiring some grades in behavioural disciplines, hoped to increase their chances for admission to medical studies. But most students had a general and genuine interest in psychology as a discipline and saw it as an important part of a *fil.kand.* (Bachelor of Philosophy) degree, many with the intention to pursue a career as a professional psychologist.

However, the establishment of this new occupation had just begun, and posts were very few. An impatient *Sveriges Psykeologförbund* (The Swedish Psychological Association) and its predecessor had long been struggling to achieve a uniform education for psychologists

and, as a long-term goal, a formal, governmental licensing of psychologists. A government commission put forward a proposal already in the 1950s, but the decision was delayed. Among other things, the teaching in theoretical subjects had to be supplemented by more applied elements, and this was accomplished in the form of courses in personality psychology, elementary psychiatry, and interview methodology. Not until the beginning of the 1960s did the final choice fall upon a tri-annual model, with at least two grades (*betyg* = semesters) in either psychology or education, and the rest of the grades in statistics and sociology. In 1958, the Swedish Medical Board had confirmed the formalization of merits through the decision that a degree based on this model would be required for posts in clinical areas. Responsibility for the required practical training, however, still rested outside the University. Such training was provided through a local agency in cooperation with the Psychological Association. Thus, all psychology students still followed the same study plan regardless of their occupational goals. This was the order that ruled at the time of the establishment of the Faculty of Social Sciences.

Student dissent

Over time, the student revolution of 1968 also reached the Department of Psychology, although not in very dramatic forms. Like else-

where, student dissatisfaction concerned the hierarchical structure of the University, with autocratic heads of department, and also the contents of the curriculum. The theory-oriented teaching offered at the Department of Psychology satisfied neither the expectations of future psychologists, nor those who studied psychology for other reasons.

There was a wish for educational content that was more relevant for application and less comprised of test theory, as well as more concerned with clinical issues and less with experimental methodology. Some asked for textbooks in Swedish rather than the Anglo-American literature that dominated Western university education in psychology. The debate was lively, and on occasion teachers had to fight for critical analysis and scientific stringency. A working group consisting of teachers and students was formed with the assignment to prepare suggestions for change. The first suggestion concerning a changed form of governance was rejected by the student representatives, who considered the suggestion as putting too much responsibility on them. Instead, an advisory committee was formed, consisting of professors and lecturers plus five student representatives. With the exception of one year, this model was in use until 1977, when a new reform of higher education made student influence permanent (*Högskoleförordningen* 1977:263).

1970s stress research

One of the early research orientations at the Department of Psychology was psychophysiology or, as it is now called, biological psychology. In the 1970s Marianne Frankenhaeuser was professor (*laborator*) of experimental psychology at the Council of Medical Research (MFR, *Medicinska Forskningsrådet*), and her activities were mainly located at the University's Department of Psychology. Her research concerned stress, a concept originally used in experimental animal research, but which had now become highly relevant within psychological research on motivation. Frankenhaeuser built a research team of co-workers recruited from among the psychology students of the University. Licentiate and PhD theses based on psycho-biological and behavioural theory, as well as biomedical empirical theory, began to be presented (Frankenhaeuser 1979). This research made use of advanced biochemical analyses of stress hormones initially performed at *Karolinska Institutet*. The extent of stress research grew, and in the 1980s a biochemical laboratory was established at the Department of Psychology in Frescati Hage. It was run there for about 25 years, entirely on external research funds.

The experimental stress research at the Department contributed basic knowledge about the intricate interaction between the social environment, the individual and her health. As

the methodology was developed and became more robust, stress research moved from the laboratory into real life, such as the school setting that was studied in collaboration with the IDA project in Örebro.

Research in work psychology

In the 1970s, a chair in Social Psychology of Working Life was established, with Bertil Gardell as the first incumbent. Work-related research had been performed before at the Department, but was now intensified by a debate on working conditions in industry that had followed upon the miners' strike in Malmfälten, an area of mineral extraction in Northern Sweden. Organizational psychology and social psychology now became relevant for critical scrutiny of working conditions and forms of organization. The interest was expanded to also include the working situation of white-collar workers and thus a new term, psychosocial working conditions, was minted. Since that time, working life has undergone radical changes and new issues of investigation have been addressed. Organizational and technical change still generates new questions for research along with some classic ones, such as the never-ending issue of how to obtain valid and reliable test instruments to be used for recruitment and selection. A large part of contemporary research, however, deals with new and changing work conditions: new forms of orga-

nization and employment, new systems of remuneration, in addition to the increasing flexibility of work.

Stress and work

A fruitful collaboration was started in the 1970s between work psychologists and stress researchers who shared a bio-psychosocial perspective on the conditions of work that over time came to undergo an accelerating change, not least through the digital revolution. Above all, the focus was on how to identify the work-related factors that contribute to stress and encumbrance and – in a longer perspective – somatic ill-health. This cooperation continued for a long time and has resulted in several big field research projects during the 1980s, 1990s and 2000s. Researchers active in this theme today are also part of the Stockholm Stress Centre (SSC), which has the overarching goal of adding to the knowledge of psychobiological mechanisms in stress and health.

Uniform training of psychologists

Efforts to establish a unified and appropriate occupational training of psychologists, and to counteract irresponsible and dubious applications of psychological knowledge, had gone on since the mid-1900s. During the 1970s, there was a breakthrough. Through several steps a new order of studies was ratified, containing strong elements of application and in-



Corridors in one of the old College of Forestry buildings convey a strange feeling of travelling by train. (Photo: Mats Danielson)

built practical training (Jonsson 2003). The term *psykologlinjen* (the psychologists' curriculum) became official, and in 1978 the occupational certification was issued by the National Board of Health and Welfare (*Socialstyrelsen*). Additional confirmation was given in 1982 when an integrated, five-year training programme for psychologists was ratified, with further specification of the goals of education (*lärandemålen*), e.g., demands for competence to take part in psycho-therapeutic tasks.

A specifically formed, five-year education for psychologists implied of course that the

competence profile of the teaching staff has had to be improved. The faculty nowadays includes a number of teachers with a PhD, who at the same time are themselves licensed psychologists and certified psychotherapists.

Premises and internal structure: the 1970s and 1980s

The strong growth of research and the expanded education of psychologists made the Department creak at the joints. At the same time, the subject attracted an increasing number of students to the regular academic education in psychology, on both the basic and advanced levels. For a time it was also necessary to create special opportunities for previously educated professional psychologists to supplement their education up to the new standard. This assignment included the BA degree described above, but also the higher level of Licentiate of Philosophy degree.

For decades, the question of how to harbour a permanently growing and diversified activity was a headache for department heads and the department board. Much work and engaged involvement was invested in one plan after the other, but for different reasons they could not be realized. Before the Department finally moved out from the city centre to Frescati, an intermediate stop was made from 1971 to 1982 in locations scattered over a couple of blocks in Vasastaden: at Hagagatan 25, where

mainly basic-level education was undertaken, and at Norrtullsgatan 41 and Norrtullsgatan 43–45 – the former *Borgerikapets änkehus* (The House for Bourgeois Widows). Here, research, PhD education and departmental administration were located. The move solved the worst of the overcrowding but was, of course, less than ideal from other points of view. Among other aspects, the integration of research and teaching was hampered for a period.

Towards the end of the 1970s, the Department had grown to the degree that it also became complicated to handle information about department activities internally within the University, as well as externally towards society. The Department was a sizeable part of the Faculty of Social Sciences, and for a while the possibility of splitting it into several, smaller departments was even discussed. In the end, formalizing the informal division between dominating research areas that had existed for a long time proved the best option. As a result six divisions were formed: Psychology of Work and Organization, Biological Psychology, Clinical Psychology, Cognitive Psychology, Perception and Psychophysics and The Psychology of Personality, Social Psychology and Development. With somewhat varying nomenclature, and in somewhat varying shape, the six divisions have lived on until today. Each of the divisions comprises a number of research groups. The divisions are involved in the education

within their own particular special areas, and therefore it becomes natural for staff who are primarily involved in teaching to choose a home location within these divisions. The formalization of an already existing structure contributed to make the width of departmental activities more visible. One aim was that each division should be represented by at least one professor. In the present situation, after the reform introducing the possibility for lecturers to apply for promotion to professor, this ambition is well fulfilled.

Much later, there was a new period of growing pains. Successful competition for research funds, and increased societal demands for professional psychologists, resulted in each of the six divisions growing to the size of other ‘normally sized’ departments within the Faculty of Social Sciences. Following the example of foreign universities, the Department then made a serious attempt to establish a new, independent Faculty within the University. This proposal, however, gained no support.

The 1980s and 1990s: Clinical research gains speed

Many people associate the discipline of psychology primarily with issues of mental illness and psychological problems and difficulties. At the Stockholm Department of Psychology, clinical research made up a minor part of the total volume of research up to the 1990s. Ever since the

1960s, there had been a division of applied psychology, where clinical research was carried out. But it was only when Carl-Otto Jonsson was appointed to professor and acting head of department that clinical psychology gained a more prominent role.

In 1992, a chair was created with the specification of clinical psychology. Thereby, the activity within this field grew further, and research with an international orientation gained speed. The chair's first incumbent was Lars-Göran Öst, and the research became directed towards issues of treatment. Since then salient themes have concerned cognitive behavioural therapy, treatment of phobias and of states of anxiety, depression, and also the unwanted side effects of psychological treatment. Presently, there is research on internet-based psychological treatment, a vital and growing field of research and application. Another theme within this field is forensic psychology, for instance the way in which children and adults perceive, remember and narrate traumatic experiences. Another theme is the study of the attachment process and parent-child interaction, both in the normal development context and in a clinical perspective.

Social psychological research

The research field of social psychology is another area that has grown in span and importance in our Department during recent decades. Social cognition is the general theme and the

research is concerned with how people's thoughts, behaviour and emotions influence and are influenced by other people. Recent examples concern research on intergroup biases in judgements, decision making, and memory, as applied in legal settings and in relation to stereotyping and prejudice. Another theme concerns the relation between psychological attachment and religiosity. Some of this research is performed as laboratory experiments, while other studies are conducted in real life.

Research in developmental psychology

To the field of developmental psychology we have to count the entire longitudinal IDA-project, as it has been pursued ever since the 1960s. Another early example of research within this field concerns studies dealing with intrapersonal communication in relation to deafness, blindness and other functional disorders. Attention theory has inspired research on the particularly strong bonds between parents and children and their role in a development perspective.

Research in cognitive psychology

Since the 1990s a central theme has been the human memory functions. In 1993, Lars-Göran Nilsson succeeded David Magnusson as the Eneroth Chair. He also remained leader of a comprehensive longitudinal project that he had started at Umeå University in 1988 called the

Betula Project. This longitudinal project studies aging, and its purpose is to explore how memory functions change in adult life and old age, how to define risk factors for dementia, and how to find early, pre-clinical signs of dementia. The project is interdisciplinary and apart from cognitive psychology it involves neurophysiology, brain imaging, genetics and gerontology. The personnel union between Stockholm and Umeå has provided researchers in cognitive psychology at the Department access to material from this very rich database. A salient theme concerns auto-biographic memory, the individual's memories from her/his life, and the complex combination of mental processes that interact in the construction of such memories. The field of cognitive psychology has always been represented at the Department, for example through extensive research

on decision making, as it is performed by individuals, by groups, and by organizations. Risk-taking behaviour has also been a closely related research theme.

The Psychotherapy Clinic and the education of psychotherapists

After the formal demand that psychologists must have competence for therapeutic tasks, the Department started a clinic for psychotherapy. The clinic offers opportunities for students in the final stage of their professional psychologist training to conduct individual therapy sessions under the surveillance of experienced, licensed psychologists/psychotherapists. The clinic is now one of the biggest in Stockholm, receiving about 4,000 visits per year. The problems addressed are of varying nature such as anxiety, depression, fears, sleeping problems, stress, etc.



The David Magnusson Lecture Hall.
(Photo: Henrik Dunér)



Frescati Hage (the Frescati Meadow).
(Photo: Henrik Dunér)



The Psychotherapy Clinic of the Department of Psychology. (Photo: Mats Danielson)

Since 2011, the Department of Psychology offers a supplementary training in psychotherapy, leading to a government license, ratified by the National Board of Health and Welfare. It is given at a half-time pace for the duration of three years, and is intended for persons who already have basic academic education in a caring profession, i.e. psychologists, physicians and social workers. One requirement is that the candidate her/himself has gone through therapy and has at least two years' experience with psychotherapy under qualified supervi-

sion. The participants choose one of two psychotherapeutic orientations: cognitive behavioural therapy (KBT) or psycho-dynamic therapy (PDT).

PhD education

Up until 1974, ten traditional PhD dissertations were defended in psychology. After the reform of higher education in 1969, and the introduction of the new doctoral degree, the yearly number of new PhD degrees steadily increased. For the period 1974–1983, 34 disser-

tations were registered. From 1984–93 there were 47, 1994–2003 94, and 2004–2013 83 PhD dissertations (Nilsson 2003). This makes an average for the whole period of 5.9 dissertations yearly. International publication and compilation theses have dominated. The sub-studies of such theses usually consist of scientific articles that are either already published or accepted for publication in international, peer-reviewed journals. It can be noted that since the normal time for PhD studies of about four years was introduced, the requirements for the *number* of sub-studies have been lowered while the quality demands on the frame paper (*kappa*) have increased.

The third task

Education and research in the subject of psychology have over the years created broad surfaces of contact with the surrounding society. Co-workers at the Department of Psychology have in many different contexts been able to offer expertise. I will select only two examples. In the 1960s, some of the researchers at the Department played a significant role in the preparations for the right-hand traffic reform to be implemented in 1967. Docent Mats Björkman, later professor at Umeå University, was appointed chairperson for the ‘Scientific Workgroup for Traffic Security, Learning, Teaching and Media’ appointed by the Right Hand Traffic Commission (Trafikverket 2004).

Together with colleagues at the Department and from Uppsala, he contributed expertise from the psychology of perception and the psychology of learning to one of the most comprehensive and successful information campaigns that has ever been implemented in our country.

An example of a concrete product is the so-called Borg Scale, named after its originator, Gunnar Borg (Borg 1998). Borg had been a student of psychology at the Stockholm Department already at the time of David Katz. He returned to Stockholm as professor in perception and psychophysics in 1980, when his research group was transferred from the Psychotechnical Institute to Stockholm University. The Borg Scale is a theoretical scale of estimation, provided with carefully chosen verbal labels for the different numerical steps. It was originally intended for the estimation of perceived physical effort, including shortness of breath and muscular fatigue. Presently it is used all over the world, not only in the training of athletes but also within rehabilitation and in medical care, where it offers patients an opportunity to communicate their experience of pain. Those of us who have moved in international circles of psychological research and have identified the Department of Psychology in Stockholm as our home base, have often heard the comment “Aha, the Borg scale!”

The Department today

Close to 180 persons have some form of employment at the Department. Just under 130 of these co-workers are engaged mainly in research, and of these about 50 are active PhD students. Roughly 30 persons have the title of professor. Some 50 people work mainly with teaching, and about 20 are administrators and technicians.


All included – the basic and advanced levels, PhD education, the programmes for psychologists and psychotherapists and other specialist educations consist of over 1,000 students per semester enrolled in the Department's education. Through the Institute for Applied Behavioural Science (ITB), the Department also supplies commissioned courses for external organisations and for departments and administrative units within Stockholm University.

The researchers publish between 150 and 190 texts per year according to the publication database DiVA. Around 90 to 100 of these are articles in scientific journals. The rest are books, chapters in books, and reports. Today, the Department of Psychology is represented in two of the University's leading research fields: 'cognitive aging' and 'stress, work and health'.



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A large, multi-story brick building with many windows, surrounded by trees and people walking on a path. The building has a classic architectural style with arched windows on the ground floor and rectangular windows above. A large tree with a thick trunk stands in the foreground, casting shadows on the building. Several people are walking on a path in front of the building, some carrying bags. The scene is set outdoors on a sunny day.

The stately main psychology building was previously used by the College of Forestry – beautiful trees in the surrounding form the remnants of its arboretum.
(Photo: Henrik Dunér)



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